

Special Meeting and Joint Meeting of the Belmont City Council and Belmont Parks and Recreation Commission

Wednesday, November 5, 2008

City Council Chambers, One Twin Pines Lane

SPECIAL MEETING

CLOSED SESSION - 6:00 P.M.

- A. Conference with Labor Negotiator, Jack Crist, pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.6: MMCEA and AFSCME

Attended by Councilmembers Feierbach, Wozniak, Braunstein, Dickenson, Lieberman, City Manager Crist, City Attorney Zafferano, Community Development Director de Melo, Human Resources Director Dino, and Labor Negotiator Tuffo. City Clerk Cook was excused from attending.

RECESS at this time, being 7:00 P.M. (to be continued at the end of the meeting).

TERRI COOK

City Clerk

This meeting was not tape recorded or videotaped.

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING

CALL TO ORDER 7:05 P.M.

ROLL CALL

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Feierbach, Wozniak, Braunstein, Dickenson, Lieberman

COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT: None

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Andrews, King, Cheehov, Shjeflo, Rafi, Sullivan, Moissiy, Bortoli

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Warden

Staff Present: City Manager Crist, Community Development Director de Melo, Parks and Recreation Director Gervias, Parks Manager Ourtiague, Recreation Manager Brunson, City Treasurer Violet, City Clerk Cook.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by City Clerk Cook.

PUBLIC/COUNCIL/COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner King commented regarding the Manor House Centennial Celebration. She noted that approximately 200 people visited during the course of the weekend's events. She thanked the City for upgrading the building.

Mayor Lieberman congratulated the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District on the successful passage of its parcel tax. He noted that this joint meeting is the first one with the Parks and

Recreation Commission in three years. He provided a brief biography of Parks and Recreation Director Gervais and Commission Chair Bortoli.

REPORT ON CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Lieberman reported that direction was given but no action taken during the Closed Session held earlier. He noted that the City Council would be returning to Closed Session following the joint meeting.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

Athletic Field Use Player Registration Fees Annual Report

Parks Manager Ourtiague stated that it has been nearly one year since the implementation of the field use fee. He noted that \$40,000 has been collected to date, and the fund balance remains at \$25,000. The goal of the use of the fees is to make the fields safer for players. He reviewed how the funds have been spent, and clarified that no funds were used to supplant existing budgets, including watering of fields. He outlined the changes in the conditions at the Ralston Middle School field as a result of the expenditure of these funds, and reviewed the upcoming work to be done on other fields.

Jay Anthony, representing Pony Baseball, stated there is significant improvement in the gopher situation at Ralston School. He noted the teams have had to spend less time filling gopher holes, and the grass is in better condition. He thanked the Parks and Recreation staff for its responses to ongoing maintenance issues.

Tom Sneider, Belmont United Soccer, noted that conditions have improved at Nesbit School. He has heard other coaches speak favorably of the conditions at the Sports Complex. There is a need to improve the existing irrigation systems.

Mayor Lieberman noted that this program just started, and that improvements have already been experienced. He noted that this is an annual program, not just a one-time project.

In response to Councilmember Braunstein, Parks Manager Ourtiague stated that it is unclear why some teams are no longer using Belmont fields, but he noted that the fields will be in better condition if they are used less. Recreation Manager Brunson noted that some groups, including those with many non-Belmont children, were not in favor of the use fee, which has resulted in less demand on the use of the fields. He clarified that less demand has not been just because of the use fee.

Mayor Lieberman noted that some cities will soon be experiencing large increases in their player use fees, which could result in teams returning to use Belmont fields.

Commissioner Andrews noted that the field use policy recently changed, resulting in Belmont teams having priority use. He stated this is a likely factor in less demand for field space by other groups.

Commissioner Shjeflo stated the goal of the policy was to favor Belmont residents. There is an issue regarding maintenance and checking on field use on weekends. He recommended adding park staff to address this. He also noted that sometimes the sprinklers are on when it is raining.

Mayor Lieberman stated this could be addressed during budget time.

Commission Chair Bortoli commended the sports groups for recommending a higher fee than what had been proposed. He noted there are not 1,000 fewer kids playing sports, but 1,000 fewer users. He clarified that some kids play several sports.

Discussion and Direction Regarding Davey Glen Park and Consideration of Resolution Authorizing Landscape Architect Services

Parks and Recreation Director Gervais provided the background of the City's acquisition of this parcel, which was set aside for future park development. A recent survey of approximately 800 neighbors resulted in an even split among three options: leave the site as open space, develop a passive park, or develop an active park. There is a need to have a landscape architect develop designs, including overlays, for all three options. He reviewed the proposed timeline. He noted that if designed well, the park could satisfy all options by using a combination of elements. There is a desire to use site features appropriately. He clarified that no cyclone fencing would be installed.

Councilmember Feierbach expressed concerns regarding insurance and liability issues if a play structure is installed.

Mayor Lieberman described the comments expressed on this topic by second graders during their recent mock City Council meeting.

Commissioner Sullivan noted that two-thirds of the larger site is wooded and is to be left untouched.

Commissioner King clarified that the Commission's recommendation was for the landscape architect to design a passive park with overlays for varying levels of activity. She noted that the Council's proposed resolution does not specify this detail.

Paul O'Leary, Friends of Davey Glen Park, stated that the Central neighborhood is under-parked. The Friends has submitted a petition from neighbors requesting the development of a park. He noted that the site has room for passive and active features. The street has a sidewalk. He clarified this would be a neighborhood park, not a destination park.

Michelle Ladcani, Belmont resident, stated that a park would add value to the neighborhood and to Belmont. There are few parks available. She noted she did not receive a survey as she lives just beyond the mailing threshold. There is a need for further outreach as there is much interest in the park site.

Dolores Callagy, Belmont resident, noted she is not against parks, but has a safety concern. She described recent illicit use of the park site. Those in favor of a developed park do not live near

the site. There is no parking available. No one walks on the street. It would be difficult to monitor the park.

Commissioner Shjeflo noted that the Commission has discussed this proposed park site extensively. Safety concerns were addressed, and have always been considered when planning park improvements. Those concerns should not stop development, as safety can be addressed. The Commission made an open-ended recommendation regarding architectural services. The property has been set aside for a park. It will raise property values.

Councilmember Feierbach expressed the need to address safety concerns regarding speeding on Davey Glen Road. She noted this park may not be used much. She expressed a concern regarding the need for additional maintenance with the development of a new park.

Parks Manager Ourtiague confirmed that there will be an impact on staff, but noted that it depends on the level of development. He recommended that if something is to be done, it should be done well. There would be an obligation for the City to maintain the park site.

Councilmember Wozniak noted that one-third of the survey respondents recommended doing nothing with the park site, and 60 percent recommended open or passive park use. She recommended one of the overlays include leaving the site as open space.

Mayor Lieberman stated that the original feedback received was to do nothing with the site, which has changed with the additional surveying of the neighborhood. He noted that the City Council has received much correspondence regarding this matter. The Central neighborhood is underserved by parks, and there is much interest in this site. He supports the hiring of an architect. He does not support developing plans for something less than desirable. He suggested getting feedback from the architect regarding what will work to satisfy all.

ACTION: Councilmember Dickenson made a motion to approve the resolution and to incorporate the comments made this evening.

Councilmember Feierbach requested clarification as to what direction is contained in the motion.

Commissioner Cheechov recommended that the architect start with leaving the site open and natural and to add overlays. Commissioner King concurred.

Mayor Lieberman stated that there is a high level of desire for an active park. He expressed support for designing an active park.

Councilmember Dickenson clarified that he would like to provide flexibility. He noted that his motion would include direction to start with leaving the site as open space.

ACTION: On a motion by Councilmember Dickenson, seconded by Councilmember Feierbach, Resolution 10071 Authorizing Landscape Architect Services for Davey Glen Park for an amount not to exceed \$60,000, said motion to include designing open space as a baseline, was unanimously approved by a roll call vote.

RECESS: 8:20 P.M.
RECONVENE: 8:26 P.M.

Discussion and Direction Regarding Semeria Park and Consideration of Resolution Authorizing Landscape Architect Services

Parks Manager Ourtiague described the recent meeting that was held at the proposed park site. He noted there was overwhelming support for the development of a park. He described the various park components that were discussed at the site meeting. Concerns expressed included parking, installation of lighting, and traffic calming. He noted that parks throughout Belmont are closed at sunset, and lighting would be expensive. He described the potential changes that could be made to the boundaries of the site, which would require the vacation of a portion of right-of-way. He outlined the available funding for park development, and noted that State bond monies are available. He also outlined the proposed schedule.

In response to Commissioner Sullivan, Parks Manager Ourtiague stated that if direction is given to vacate right-of-way, the architect could work around that issue, which would not likely delay the project.

Mike Bushue, Belmont resident, expressed concerns regarding the impact on traffic patterns should some of the right-of-way be vacated as proposed. He also expressed concerns regarding the loss of parking. He noted that he does not park in front of his home because of a blind curve on Semeria Avenue. Currently the site is used for overnight overflow parking. He expressed support for park development.

Dennis Fetterley, Belmont resident, expressed support for the development of a park at this site. He expressed concerns regarding a vehicle's ability to make a U-turn at this intersection should the additional right-of-way be vacated. He suggested closing Semeria Avenue and making it a cul-de-sac. He expressed concerns regarding the loss of parking and suggested incorporating some parking into the design that would be unobtrusive.

Commissioner King noted that the City purchased a park site, not a parking lot. She noted that if a home had been built on this site, there would be no parking available for the neighborhood. This park site does not need additional parking, as it is within walking distance from many homes. She questioned why making a U-turn is important.

Commissioner Shjeflo suggested including the cul-de-sac proposal in comments to the architect. He commended the City Council in its quick action in acquiring the property when it became available. This site is not a destination park, and parking is not a factor. It is only used for overflow and overnight parking because it is a vacant lot. It has potential for a park, and is the perfect location for a park. He supports the acquisition of the additional right-of-way as proposed.

Commission Chair Bortoli noted that parking was previously discussed by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Some spaces could be included as timed parking, or for overnight parking.

Councilmember Feierbach stated it is hard to take away the parking when it has been made available. She suggested including some parking at the site. She expressed concerns regarding safety and visibility into the park site, and recommended fencing the site using materials similar to that used at Twin Pines Park. She noted that the neighbors have expressed their willingness to help with this project.

In response to Councilmember Dickenson's concerns regarding the cost for the architect compared to the cost for the Davey Glen site, which is larger, Parks Manager Ourtiague noted that projected costs are based on a percentage of the estimated total project cost.

Mayor Lieberman noted that the Davey Glen site is more challenging. He also expressed concern regarding the architectural costs, and suggested that the Council give direction for an amount less than \$50,000. He also recommended designing some parking into the Semeria Park site.

Parks Manager Ourtiague noted that there may be an economy of scale if the same architect were hired for both projects.

ACTION: On a motion by Councilmember Dickenson, seconded by Councilmember Feierbach, Resolution 10072 Authorizing Landscape Architect Services for Semeria Park for an amount not to exceed \$50,000, said motion to include designing no more than three parking spaces and direction to proceed with the vacation of right-of-way, was unanimously approved by a roll call vote.

Strategic Planning for the Parks and Recreation Department

Parks and Recreation Director Gervais reviewed the functions of the Parks and Recreation Department, and noted that duties fall into two categories: maintained assets and recreation. He outlined the history of park development throughout the years, and provided a comparison to the City of San Carlos in the areas of maintenance, amount of park space, and staff. He reviewed the recreation programs offered, and noted gaps in programs and underserved segments of the community.

Parks and Recreation Director Gervais outlined the various ways to measure success. He noted that the department's goal is community adoption of programs, activities and events, and to improve the quality of life. The department supports developing Barrett as a community center. He provided examples of areas within the department that need to be addressed.

Councilmember Wozniak expressed her appreciation for the 360-degree review of the department. She commented that she played in what used to be vacant lots in Belmont when she was a child.

Patty Ciesla, Belmont-based bicycle shop owner, noted that her shop and local bicycle groups perform volunteer trail maintenance in Belmont. She commented that open space connects the

community and enriches lives. Many people are not involved in organized sports and need options for recreation.

Commissioner Shjeflo commented that the Commission does not always hear about all of the components of the department. He commented regarding the player fee and its connection to community adoption. People chose Belmont for its parks and open space, which is a big component of the community. He supports creating the best system possible.

Commissioner Moissiy expressed her appreciation for the demographic data. She supports increasing volunteerism and targeting groups not being served. She noted that volunteering increases quality of life.

Susan Wright, Belmont resident, stated that walkability is an important component of the community, which needs to be addressed.

Councilmember Wozniak responded that the Green Advisory Committee is addressing walkability. She noted the upcoming pedestrian decoy operation, and commented that she supports a Share the Road policy.

Councilmember Feierbach stated that sidewalks and the right-of-way need to remain clear in order to be walkable.

Patty Ciesla commented that streets should be planned for non-auto use.

Commissioner Bortoli noted that Sam Trans has indicated that the City of Belmont is not interested in senior mobility.

Mayor Lieberman stated that this topic should be the focus of a future joint meeting with the Parks and Recreation Commission, in order to have a more in-depth discussion. It provides a new way of looking at the department, which lacked a strategic plan until now. Prior to this it was always reacting and did not approach issues holistically. More can be accomplished using this approach.

Tree Board Composition

Parks and Recreation Director Gervais stated that the City will be updating its tree ordinance, and the City Council recommended changing the membership of the tree board. He noted that trees are addressed by different departments. It was recommended that the tree board consist of a blend of Parks and Recreation Commissioners and Planning Commissioners, plus one additional person to make an odd number. He commented that trees will continue to become a bigger issue throughout the community.

Commissioner King stated that the existing tree board has never been called upon to address issues. She noted that there are Planning Commission members who are interested in trees, and some Parks and Recreation Commission members are not interested in trees, but are focused on sports. She recommended that the seventh member not be a City Council member or a paid arborist.

Councilmember Dickenson stated that there is a need to move quickly to restructure the tree board.

Councilmember Feierbach noted that the various commissions do not often interface with one another, and she supports the blended tree board concept.

Councilmember Wozniak noted that some Planning Commissioners are passionate about trees because it protects greenscape.

Commissioner Sullivan recommended making information available that describes regulations for tree protection.

Councilmember Braunstein expressed concern that the tree board be respectful of private property rights.

Commission Chair Bortoli expressed concerns regarding the process and wondered if the tree board will be making decisions. He expressed support for a revision to the tree board membership.

Council concurred to discuss this issue with both commissions before it comes back to the City Council for formal revision of the tree board.

Other Items of Mutual Interest

Mayor Lieberman reminded the Commission members of the need to access their City email on a regular basis. He thanked the Commissioners for their service. He expressed the need to meet more often in order to engage in more dialog.

Commission Chair Bortoli thanked the City Council for taking the time to meet.

ADJOURNMENT of the Joint Meeting at this time, being 10:00 P.M. City Council (only) adjourned to continued Closed Session.

CONTINUED CLOSED SESSION

- A. Conference with Labor Negotiator, Jack Crist, pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.6: MMCEA and AFSCME

Attended by Councilmembers Feierbach, Wozniak, Braunstein, Dickenson, Lieberman, City Manager Crist, City Attorney Zafferano, Community Development Director de Melo, Human Resources Director Dino, and Labor Negotiator Tuffo. City Clerk Cook was excused from attending.

ADJOURNMENT at this time, being 11:30 P.M.

TERRI COOK

City Clerk

Joint Meeting Tape Recorded and Videotaped
Audio Recording 710 (Closed Session not taped)